

**Keeping Our Communities Safe  
Council President Scott Peters, First District  
For the La Jolla Village News, February 2007**

It all started with a cup of coffee. Last year, former San Diego Fire Chief Jeff Bowman invited me to sit down with the crew at Fire Station 13 on Nautilus Street. They sought my help in securing a few thousand dollars to replace aging window screens. I don't think any of us anticipated the response that simple request would generate.

While the men and women of Fire Station 13 impressed me with their dedication and integrity, their living and working conditions were less than ideal. Built in 1976 as a temporary facility, the station is little more than a single family home divided up into living and working areas. Men and women share a common dormitory space, the bathrooms are small and inefficient, and the station is out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I thought I would ask my friend Trip Bennett, an architect and member of the La Jolla Sunrise Rotary club, to look the place over and give me an idea of what improvements we might make and what they might cost. The visit to Fire Station 13 resonated with Trip-whose son is a firefighter-on a number of levels. He and the Sunrise Rotary club adopted this project as a way to honor their friend and long-time Rotarian Jack Morse, whose family was rescued from a catastrophic house fire by the Fire Station 13 crew.

With an ambitious fundraising goal and a generous matching partner, the Rotary Club raised close to a half-million dollars to renovate the station, creating separate work and living areas and bringing the facility into compliance with ADA regulations. We recently broke ground on the renovation project, which should be complete by mid-May.

This project would not have happened without the vision and leadership of Trip Bennett. My thanks go to him, the members of the La Jolla Sunrise Rotary, and the many, many community members who donated to this effort on behalf of our hard-working firefighters. There is still time to be a part of this great community effort. You can close the gap and help the Rotary Club secure the final \$50,000 needed to complete the planned renovations. Visit the project website, [www.fs13androtary.com](http://www.fs13androtary.com) for more information.

If the City of San Diego is to retain these dedicated and highly-qualified firefighters and also our police officers, we must compensate them fairly. Our police department continues to struggle with a steady exodus of officers seeking higher-paying jobs in other cities. The fire academy recently extended its recruitment period after receiving less than 100 applications, a precipitous drop from recent years. Salary and benefit packages in San Diego are consistently lower than other cities within the County.

We must ensure the safety of our communities by addressing the needs of our police and fire departments. I am encouraged by Mayor Sanders' promise to boost police pay this year, and I will work with the mayor and our police officers union to reach an agreement that is fair to our public safety employees and their families, and responsible to taxpayers.

This will be a year of important choices for the City. We must prioritize and fund the city services which most directly benefit you, the taxpayer, as well as paying down our pension debt and catching up on deferred maintenance. I will keep you updated on the Council's efforts through this column and my community newsletter. I invite you to contact my office with your thoughts and priorities. (619) 236-6611, [scottpeters@saniego.gov](mailto:scottpeters@saniego.gov).